United Nations

Daily Highlights

Department of Public Information • Central News Section • New York

Prepared by Central News

DH/1142
15 May 1992

F R I D A Y H I G H L I G H T S

+ Security Council holds consultations on draft resolution concerning situation in Bosnia-Herzegovina; formal meeting expected this evening.

+ United Nations announces cease-fire agreement reached in Sarajevo, effective immediately, following talks under United Nations auspices; talks between the parties to resume tomorrow, if cease-fire holds.

+ At United Nations Headquarters, Foreign Minister of Bosnia-Herzegovina calls on international community to react urgently to situation to prevent "complete annihilation of people and destruction of the country".

+ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees launches urgent appeal for $34 million to aid 230,000 Somali and Ethiopian refugees who have sought sanctuary in neighbouring Kenya.

+ Second session of Convention for a Democratic South Africa begins today in Johannesburg.

+ Director-General of International Atomic Energy Agency pays official visit to Democratic People's Republic of Korea concerning nuclear programme.

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The Security Council was scheduled to hold a formal meeting this evening to consider a draft resolution put forward by Belgium, France and the United Kingdom concerning the situation in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Speaking to correspondents last night following consultations by the Council on the Secretary-General's report on the deteriorating situation in the area, Japanese Permanent Representative to the United Nations, Yoshio Hatano, called the report "a grim, discouraging report". Expressing optimism, British Permanent Representative to the United Nations, Sir David Hannay, said the Council hoped to adopt a resolution which would "give the Secretary-General full backing" for his peacekeeping efforts in Croatia. He

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said the resolution contained "clear, political messages", calling for the withdrawal of the Yugoslav National Army (JNA) from Bosnia-Herzegovina; the disarming of people who remain behind; and the cessation of interference in the region. The Council was also expected to call attention to the urgent need for humanitarian assistance to the suffering people in the area.

The British Ambassador said Council members "are of one mind" that the United Nations "should not walk away from this problem" in Bosnia-Herzegovina. He said Council members would ask the Secretary-General to keep his decision "under review" in order to be able to "move quickly in a humanitarian spirit", should the situation change.

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A United Nations spokesman announced today that a cease-fire agreement had been reached in Sarajevo, effective immediately, following talks which took place at the headquarters of the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) in the city, under the auspices of the United Nations. If the cease-fire holds, he said, the talks between the parties will resume tomorrow morning.

On the situation of the 300 United Nations staff at the Rainbow Hotel in Sarajevo, the spokesman said most of them were working today at headquarters in the city, and the rest were moving freely in the hotel. Another 50 staff, who were with the UNPROFOR Commander in a convoy trying to reach headquarters, had been detained at a Serbian road block for several hours and the Commander was working on their freedom of movement at the moment.

Concerning the operation in Croatia, the spokesman said the demilitarization operation of forces in the east sector in Croatia began as scheduled this morning.

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At a press briefing today at Headquarters, Mr. Silajdzic said there would be "hundreds of thousands of victims" of the current conflict in Bosnia-Herzegovina if nothing was done. Tens of thousands of people in Mostar and Sarajevo were threatened by starvation and by the constant shelling from heavy artillery. He added that all that was left was the hope that "they run out of shells before we run out of people".

Asked about his reaction to the Secretary-General's report before the Security Council, he replied that "that report says what the United Nations cannot do; our greatest hope is that the Security Council will finally say what the United Nations can do". The Foreign Minister expressed the hope the humanitarian situation will be addressed and that destruction will be stopped by placing all heavy artillery under international control. He also called for the creation of security zones in the capital of Sarajevo, its surroundings and the airport in order to ensure the relief support.

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The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees has launched an urgent appeal for $34 million to aid 230,000 Somali and Ethiopian refugees who have sought sanctuary in neighbouring Kenya.

In a statement today, the Agency said the refugees, who are fleeing civil warfare, drought and famine, at the rate of about 2,800 a day, are arriving in "appalling condition". They are badly malnourished and many die within a few days of reaching the Agency's already overcrowded camps. The rising death rate has alarmed Agency officials.

UNHCR officials say there is strong indication that the influx will continue as the fighting in Somalia has shown "no signs of abating", and they have predicted a caseload averaging about 287,000 people. The Agency says food delivery is "inordinately expensive" and cited the location of camps in particularly remote, arid and semi-arid areas as one reason. The drought has also made it impossible to purchase basic food supplies on the African continent and has made it necessary to import food from Europe, the Agency said.

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The second session of the Convention for a Democratic South Africa (CODESA II) -- the negotiating forum for transitional arrangements leading to democratic rule -- began this morning in Johannesburg.

In an interview with United Nations Radio today, the head of the three-man United Nations observer delegation to the Convention, the Permanent Representative of India to the United Nations, Chinmaya Gharekhan, described the session as "crucial" and said the future of South Africa would depend on the outcome of this session of CODESA. Yesterday, Mr. Gharekhan met with the President of the African National Congress of South Africa (ANC), Nelson Mandela. He said additional meetings were planned for today and tomorrow with Mr. Mandela and the leaders of other political organizations.

The United Nations supports the negotiating process for a democratic South Africa and participated as an observer in the first meeting of CODESA last December. According to a United Nations Spokesman, "the Secretary-General attaches great importance to CODESA II and urges all the representatives of the South African people to make a concerted effort at CODESA II in order to establish the foundation for a new constitution for a united, non-racial and democratic South Africa".

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At the invitation of the Government of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, the Director-General of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), Hans Blix, accompanied by senior advisers, is paying an official visit to that country from 11 to 16 May.

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In the course of the visit, the Director-General and his advisers met with Premier Yon Hyong Muk; the Minister of Atomic Energy, Choi Hak Gun; the First Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Kang Sok Ju; and other officials.

During meetings with North Korean officials, the Director-General was assured that the entire nuclear programme of the country was devoted to peaceful purposes, that the safeguards agreement would be scrupulously respected and that, with a view to creating transparency and confidence, officials of the Agency could visit any site and installation they wished to see, irrespective of whether it was found on the initial list submitted to IAEA.

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